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Summary record of the 14th meeting
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Chair: Mr. Yohanna (Vice-Chair) ..... (Nigeria)

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In the absence of Mr. Momen (Bangladesh), Mr. Yohanna (Nigeria), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 23: Eradication of poverty and other development issues (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017) (*continued*) (A/66/221)

(b) Women in development (*continued*) (A/66/219)

(c) Human resources development (*continued*) (A/66/206)

1. **Mr. Mac-Donald** (Suriname), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), which aligned itself with the statement of the Group of 77 and China, said that the challenges to poverty reduction were mounting. The situation of the World Solidarity Fund was a disappointing testament to the insufficient political will of the international community. Poverty reduction would require sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth leading to job creation. However, the economic crisis had led to sharp falls in employment and earnings, growing numbers of working poor, surging food prices and global food insecurity.

2. Because agriculture was the main source of livelihood for poor people, CARICOM had established the Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency and the Regional Policy for Food and Nutrition Security. The latter was based on the 2009 Declaration of the World Summit on Food Security and, in particular, principle 3 thereof. CARICOM was also emphasizing the need for the region's population to eat what it produced in order to guarantee food safety and combat chronic non-communicable diseases. All of those challenges required a multisectoral approach.

3. The criteria for reclassifying States as middle-income countries, as had been done for all CARICOM members except Haiti, should include vulnerability, in order to allow for the effects of natural disasters such as hurricanes. The international community should fulfil the pledges made to Haiti after the catastrophic earthquake of 2010 and intensify the reconstruction of the country.

4. Increased attention must be given to social integration of disadvantaged groups. Legal empowerment of the poor as a development strategy should continue to focus on removing barriers to formal markets and institutions, promoting property rights systems that favoured the poor and ensuring equitable and sustainable access to land and other natural resources, while fostering food security and sustainable livelihoods, and also pay attention to increasing opportunities for business linkages and market access.

5. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) should continue to be the overarching framework for United Nations development activities. There was a need for a strengthened global partnership for development based on national priorities and ownership of development strategies. CARICOM noted with concern that official development assistance for 2010 had remained below 0.7 per cent of gross national product of developed countries, and applauded those countries that had increased their contributions. Stakeholders should intensify assistance for the implementation of the Global Jobs Pact and Social Protection Floor Initiative.

6. **Ms. Sriphiromya** (Thailand) said that her Government was working to ensure equal opportunities, free primary and secondary education and universal health care. Thailand's approach emphasized agriculture and small and medium-sized enterprises by facilitating access to credit and markets, promoting agricultural productivity and food security, and enhancing competitiveness through research, technology and human resources development. Her Government had adopted the concept of the creative economy: creative industries drawing on the national culture, folk ways and intellectual traditions of each society had great potential for job creation.

7. Deeper regional integration could promote trade and investment, generating employment and creating economies of scale. Integration of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was a high priority, as was the development of regional transportation and information communication networks.

8. Thailand supported efforts to enhance coherence and coordination through a system-wide plan of action for poverty eradication and appreciated the contributions made by the private sector, civil society and United Nations entities, particularly the United

Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. Thailand would continue to implement the Global Jobs Pact and the Social Protection Floor Initiative. Lastly, she was grateful for the support that her country had received in order to cope with the recent flooding.

9. **Mr. Abdullah** (Malaysia) said that his country had introduced a range of programmes in pursuit of sustained, inclusive and equitable growth, and expected to achieve developed nation status by 2020. Sustained economic growth could be achieved with proper planning and long-term political stability. Malaysia was now focusing on attracting investment flows and transforming rural areas to bring private investment and employment opportunities. The Government had opened grocery stores and affordable clinics in order to mitigate the effect of rising living costs. Malaysia was on track to eradicate both urban and rural poverty.

10. The Malaysia Technical Cooperation Programme had been established in 1980 in order to promote technical cooperation among developing countries, strengthen regional and subregional cooperation and foster collective self-reliance among developing countries. It stressed human resource development by providing some 70 short-term specialized courses in a range of areas which had benefited over 20,000 participants. Over the previous five years, Malaysia had spent over $66 million on technical assistance and capacity-building under the Programme.

11. **Ms. Al-Hadid** (Jordan) said that the inclusion of the poorest and the most vulnerable in development was a priority of her country's national agenda. Its national strategy for microfinance had been recognized for addressing the areas of health, the environment and education, while also improving economic security for low-income workers and increasing employment opportunities in rural areas.

12. **Mr. Teo** Zi-Ming (Singapore) said that his country's experience showed that the goal of eradicating poverty could be achieved. On attaining self-rule in 1959, it had faced high unemployment, a growing population, labour unrest and political tension. Drawing on the advice of United Nations experts and a range of international agencies, as well as its own good leadership and hardworking population, Singapore had embarked on the process of growth and development. Its excellent education system enabled Singaporeans from disadvantaged backgrounds to reach their full potential. Social safety nets, public assistance and skills training were provided in order to ensure that nobody was left behind. Measures had been put in place to promote universal home ownership and affordable health care.

13. National strategies to combat poverty should be complemented by regional cooperation. ASEAN had taken significant action to narrow the development gap and enhance regional integration. Singapore continued to assist other developing countries by providing training and sharing technical expertise in such areas as education, environmental management, economic development and governance.

14. **Mr. Bamba** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the persistent effects of the economic and financial crisis continued to thwart efforts to implement the forward-looking macroeconomic policies that Governments had committed themselves to in General Assembly resolution 65/1. Remittances, flows of official development assistance and prices of raw materials for export had fallen. Tackling those problems would require greater synergies and coherence.

15. As it emerged from an acute crisis, Côte d'Ivoire faced a number of challenges including security, reconstruction and economic recovery. His Government had developed a new plan to fight poverty in the period 2012 to 2015. A presidential emergency plan totalling some $90 million had been prepared in order to address immediate needs for drinking water, education, electricity, urban sanitation and health. Well before the end of the post-election crisis, the President had decided to provide free health care for the poorest sections of the population. The Government relied on the support of its development partners including the international financial institutions, the African Development Bank Group, the European Union and bilateral donors. The preconditions for economic recovery were now in place.

16. The recovery strategy focused on the private sector as the engine of growth. At the macroeconomic level, the cocoa, mining, energy, tax and financial sectors would be reformed. Foreign investment would boost the production of coffee and petrol and mining resources. Bridges, motorways and thermal and hydroelectric power stations would be built.

17. **Ms. Agada** (Niger) said her country's poverty reduction strategy until the target year of 2015 saw the rural sector as the principal engine of economic growth. It focused on achieving sustained economic growth by creating wealth and employment, particularly among the rural poor, with a view to creating a diversified, competitive economy in an integrated subregion. However, Niger remained strongly dependent on an agricultural sector that was archaic, inefficient, ineffective and vulnerable to climate fluctuations. The annual economic growth rate of 3.9 per cent from 2002 to 2006 was far from sufficient for it to realize the MDGs by 2015. The population growth rate, which was one of the highest in the world, limited the impact of any major structural change.

18. The new economic and social policy framework was based on the MDGs and the integration and poverty reduction programmes agreed at the continental, regional and subregional levels. The strategy provided that by 2012, the country would achieve a range of target figures with respect to economic growth, poverty rate, malnutrition, literacy, infant mortality, maternal mortality, incidence of HIV/AIDS, access to drinking water and electricity, total fertility rate, protected lands and grain production. Significant progress had already been made in improving school attendance, access to drinking water, youth mortality rates, living standards and women's access to microcredit.

19. **Mr. Fernández-Arias Minuesa** (Spain) said that his delegation supported the Secretary-General's recommendations with regard to integrating a gender perspective into national development strategies. Spain valued the gender perspective both as an end in itself and as a cross-cutting issue. Its current master plan for development included a stronger gender component in order to promote the advancement of women in developing countries. The European Union Plan of Action on Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment in Development 2010-2015, which had been adopted during Spain's presidency of the European Union, was intended to foster implementation of the MDGs at the domestic level.

20. Spain paid particular attention to peacebuilding, combating gender violence and upholding respect for diversity and women's sexual and reproductive rights, and would continue to increase the proportion of its aid intended for gender equality, which had already risen by 400 per cent over recent years. It had concluded framework agreements with international entities whose work either directly or indirectly addressed women's issues, such as the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Children's Fund. In order to bolster democratic citizenship, it was essential to strengthen feminist and women's civil society organizations and ensure women's effective involvement in public policies. With that end in mind, Spain had established a Fund for Gender Equality within UN-Women.

21. **Mr. Stokes** (Australia) said that gender equality was central to economic and human development, with benefits not only for today's men and women, their families and their communities, but for all subsequent generations. Promoting it was an overarching principle of his country's rapidly growing aid programme, whose main development objectives included improved maternal health, education for girls and the empowerment of women to participate in the economy and in leadership roles.

22. His Government had recently appointed its first Global Ambassador for Women and Girls, who would provide a strong voice in promoting the human and development rights of women and girls around the world. As the Secretary-General's report noted, gender-sensitive budgeting was pioneered in his country in the 1980s, and it continued to set an example of good practices in matching resources to goals, building the planning and budgeting capacities of Government agencies and promoting accountability.

23. More had to be done internationally to ensure the provision of accurate and timely gender-disaggregated data. The United Nations Gender Marker was a successful and practical tool for ensuring that the needs of women and girls were integrated into humanitarian programming, and United Nations agencies should explore how it could be further applied in development programming.

24. Stakeholders and donors should likewise ensure that a gender perspective was effectively integrated into global development cooperation efforts. The upcoming Fourth High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness and the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) would be important opportunities to secure sustained development

commitments to the world's women and girls. Women and girls in the least developed countries (LDCs) were some of the world's poorest and most vulnerable, and commitments made at the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries should be met with that perspective in mind.

25. The establishment of UN-Women was a milestone for women in the context of development. Its mandate to coordinate gender-specific initiatives across the United Nations system had the potential to deliver true gains for women and girls. Funding was essential to that end, and his Government had increased its core contribution to UN-Women sixfold between 2009 and 2011. As Australia's aid programme continued to double by 2015, women and girls would remain at the forefront of its focus and its commitments.

26. **Mr. Umetaliev** (Kyrgyzstan) said that development concerns were central to his Government's policies, with poverty reduction, education, public health and protection of the most vulnerable segments of the population commanding particular attention. Since the adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration in 2000, extreme poverty in his country had been reduced from 33 per cent of the population to 3 per cent. There was now nearly universal access to clean drinking water, a high level of education had been attained and women had increased their participation in political life.

27. In response to the challenges of poverty reduction, his Government had taken measures to increase spending on social needs, to redistribute revenues in favour of the poorest and most vulnerable, to overcome the effects of the financial crisis, to rein in rising food prices and to target segments of the population adversely affected by structural reforms.

28. High literacy rates had always been one of his country's signal accomplishments, and promoting greater access to higher quality primary, secondary and professional education was a central priority of its national development strategy. With respect to women and development, a long-term programme was needed to promote women's employment, most notably in rural areas. To that end, his country had launched the Agricultural Investments and Services Project, believing that the role of women in development should be appropriately reflected, in the light of the MDGs.

29. **Mr. Hassen** (Ethiopia) said that it was disturbing that more than a third of the population of sub-Saharan Africa continued to live in extreme poverty. Job creation, building productive capacities, investing in rural development and supporting women and children would be key performance measures to gauge the effectiveness of Governments in reducing poverty.

30. In that context, his Government had adopted a successful national Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP), which had enabled it to achieve sustained economic growth and a significant reduction in poverty. With double-digit annual economic growth since 2004, his country's economy was one of the fastest-growing in the world.

31. While growth was a necessary condition for poverty reduction, it was not of itself sufficient to attaining that goal. His Government had invested over 60 per cent of its budget on programmes to assist the poor and was working directly with communities, stakeholders and international partners to target vulnerable populations, especially women and children. In 1995, 49.5 per cent of his country's population had been severely deprived. A decade later, that figure had dropped to 38.7 per cent, and it had fallen further to 29.2 per cent in 2010. Encouraged by the results, his Government was implementing a new five-year Growth and Transformation Plan to achieve a reduction to 22 per cent by 2015.

32. However, domestic obstacles remained, including economic, financial, technical and cultural problems. Meanwhile, global phenomena such as climate change, rising commodity prices and the economic downturn had all contributed to the challenges being faced. Nothing was more dehumanizing than to live in poverty, and poverty eradication was not only a moral obligation but also in the interests of humanity as a whole.

33. **Mr. Alibabaee** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that poverty eradication was an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, in particular for developing countries that continued to face numerous shared challenges such as extreme poverty, food insecurity, high unemployment, onerous debt burdens, climate change and a lack of financial aid.

34. In countries with high rates of inequality, growth alone did not help alleviate poverty, but exacerbated its worst effects. As a result, inclusive development could not rely on market forces. As noted in the Secretary-General's report, the impact of growth on poverty reduction depended on how well the benefits of that

growth were distributed. Meeting the MDG target of eradicating extreme poverty by 2015 required not only steady growth but greater assistance for the poorest segments of society, most importantly by targeting growth in sectors capable of generating greater employment. In that context, his Government had a policy of allocating revenues to subsidize poor and less advanced regions, thereby making a major contribution to alleviating unemployment in rural areas.

35. **Ms. Mongwa** (Botswana) said that poverty eradication remained the centrepiece of development goals and aspirations. Poverty was a major impediment to development, especially in developing countries, and it was vital that all individual and common aid commitments should be met. While extreme poverty in Africa had been falling rapidly in recent years, the continent continued to face serious challenges, including worsening terms of trade for African products, a lack of financial resources for development, declining levels of investment in key domestic infrastructure projects, as well as high unemployment rates, especially among the young.

36. Those problems had been amplified by the global food, energy and financial crises to leave developing countries that were net importers of food, such as her own, facing an uphill battle to provide for their populations. Her Government nevertheless believed that the challenges were not insurmountable, and continued to enact a number of social safety nets, including free education, subsidized health-care programmes, access to antiretroviral drugs, provision of food in schools, programmes for orphans and the destitute, and old-age pension schemes. Such programmes required the continued support of the international community, which her Government deeply appreciated.

37. **Mr. Karageorgiades** (Observer for the Sovereign Military Order of Malta) said that the fight against poverty and exclusion were at the heart of his Order's mission: for more than 900 years, its core principle had been to assist every person in distress, without distinction of race, origin or religion. Currently it was active in more than 120 countries through its international humanitarian arm Malteser International, and it had recently inaugurated additional poverty eradication projects in Cambodia, Kenya, Sudan and India.

38. In a world where economic distress was a fact of life, the plight of the poor, the sick, the homeless, the internally displaced, the disabled and the elderly had become ever more acute. As a religious lay order with a long tradition of caring for the disadvantaged, his organization was acutely aware of the need to continue its mission, and was grateful for the Second Committee's understanding that the eradication of poverty was based on a process of social integration founded on consensus and solidarity.

39. **Ms. Barth** (International Labour Organization) said that her organization fully concurred with the policy recommendations outlined in document A/66/221, and reiterated the need for enhanced policy coherence and continued collaboration by Member States, United Nations system agencies, civil society and other partners in support of poverty eradication efforts through the promotion of the Decent Work Agenda.

40. The lag in recovery of the job market in the aftermath of the global economic crisis continued to impede poverty reduction efforts. In seeking solutions, as much attention should be paid to the quality of jobs as to their quantity, as millions were working at a subsistence level, often in the informal economy where they were denied human dignity. Policies had to focus on transforming the economic models that bred poverty in order to deliver economic growth with social justice. The Decent Work Agenda provided an efficient model for attaining that goal.

41. The key to bridging the gap between poverty and decent work was ensuring that full and rewarding employment should be central macroeconomic objectives alongside low inflation and sound fiscal measures. Likewise, the transition to green and sustainable economies was an area where policy coherence could facilitate growth by encouraging investment and the creation of green jobs, as endorsed by the Global Jobs Pact.

42. Her organization was actively cooperating with other specialized agencies to build policy coherence and looked forward to continuing its engagement with Member States, the United Nations system, as well as the NGO Sub-Committee on Poverty Eradication. Decent work was central to poverty eradication efforts and an essential means of achieving more efficient growth which could lead to equitable, inclusive and sustainable development.

43. **Ms. Solomon** (Observer for the International Organization for Migration) underlined the important link between migration and poverty eradication efforts. That link was most forcefully demonstrated by the issue of remittances, which in 2010 had totalled $325 billion through official channels to developing countries alone. The approximately 214 million international migrants worldwide were thus significant actors whose economic and social behaviour needed to be factored into any discussion of poverty eradication.

44. Her organization likewise welcomed the emphasis in the Secretary-General's report on human resources development (A/66/206) on the potential that migration presented for human development. Skills and knowledge transfers associated with migration were valuable additions to national economies, and Governments should dedicate greater attention to migrants' skill development, particularly in destination countries. Likewise, a gender perspective was crucial when designing initiatives to eradicate poverty, and any gender mainstreaming programme, as outlined in the Secretary-General's Report on Integrating a Gender Perspective into National Development Strategies should acknowledge the role of migrant women.

45. **Ms. Ratsifandrihamanana** (Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations), speaking also on behalf of the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Food Programme, said that women, as 43 per cent of the agricultural workforce in rural areas of developing countries, were indisputable contributors to economic and social development. In many countries women were the main farmers or producers, often with little or no pay, and they were likewise small business entrepreneurs who kept the rural economy alive. Despite their central role, however, they continued to face multiple impediments and their efforts remained largely invisible and unrecognized. Women tended to have smaller plots of land and less secure tenures than men, and were less likely to use improved technologies and purchased inputs, thereby reducing their yields.

46. Promoting gender equality in rural areas therefore needed to become a key component in the fight against poverty and hunger. Ensuring that women had equal access to agricultural inputs could increase production on women-headed farms by up to 30 per cent, which could reduce the number of undernourished people in the world by up to 150 million.

47. Disparities in progress between urban and rural areas were underscored by the fact that rural children were twice as likely to be underweight as their urban counterparts, with severe repercussions for productivity and growth. In order to address the rural gender gap, Governments needed to recognize that policies and institutions had different impacts on men and women. Good rural development policy decisions required a proper consideration of gender differences.

48. In addition gender equality had to be guaranteed both on paper and in practice by allowing women to buy, sell or inherit land, to open savings accounts or borrow money, and to enter into contracts or sell produce. As the 56th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Rio+20 and the 2015 target date for the MDGs approached, greater attention had to be paid to the role of rural women in development.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.